

Central Montana Fire Zone

Malta Field Office

Fire Management Plan

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I. Introduction

Findings from the review of the Interagency Federal Wildland Fire Policy recommended that: Federal Fire Management Agencies and programs are to provide for firefighter and public safety, protect and enhance land management objectives and human welfare, integrate programs and disciplines, require interagency collaboration, emphasize the natural ecological role of fire, and contribute to ecosystem sustainability. This fire management plan will develop the basis to meet Federal Wildland Fire Policy, National Fire Plan direction and comply with all appropriate resource management plans (RMP) and amendments in the Malta Field Office. This plan is based on current National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliant planning documents and is not in itself a NEPA document.

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Malta Field Office Fire Management Plan (M-FMP) is to identify and integrate all wildland fire management guidance, direction, and activities required to implement national fire policy and fire management direction from the Judith Valley Phillips (RMP) and the Fire/fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (State Fire Plan). Overall direction from the RMPs and associated implementation plans allow for fire to be restored as an integral part of ecosystems. This will meet resource management objectives and improve protection of human life and property through the reduction of hazardous fuels. The FMP allows management direction to be easily accessible by fire and resource personnel. It highlights management direction to facilitate development and implementation of fire management strategies. A Glossary of Terms is provided at the end of this document to assist in clarifying technical terms.

B. Collaborative Process Identification

The M-FMP is a strategic document identifying approved fire management direction determined by the RMPs and analyzed in the final environmental impact statement for that plan. This FMP was developed with input from and consultation with representatives from the Fort Peck and Fort Belknap Tribes, US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the State of Montana, and interested citizens. The M-FMP meets the national requirement that all BLM administered lands subject to wildland fires are managed under a current FMP. The M-FMP also meets regulatory

compliance requirements with the National Environmental Policy Act. This is a strategic document that does not make resource management decisions or project specific implementation decisions and therefore is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis (Categorical Exclusion 516 DM2, Appendix 1, Chapter 2, 1.10). Prior to implementing fire management projects on-the-ground, additional environmental analysis and compliance with other federal and state regulatory requirements such as the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act will be required.

C. Authorities

Authorities for the development of the M-FMP are listed below:

- Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; U.S.C. 594).
- Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; U.S.C. 315).
- Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955 (69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856, 1856a).
- Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).
- The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701).
- Disaster Relief Act, Section 417 (Public Law 93-288).
- Annual Appropriations Acts for the Department of the Interior.
- United States Department of the Interior Manual (910 DM 1.3).
- 2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Update).
- 1998 Departmental Manual 620 Chapter 1, Wildland Fire Management General Policy and Procedures.

II. Relationship to Land Management Planning/Fire Policy

A. Policy

The Malta FMP derives overall program guidance from the following:

- 2000 BLM Handbook 9214, “Prescribed Fire Management” describes authority and policy for prescribed fire use on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.
- September 2000, “Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment.”
- October 2000, The national Cohesive Strategy goal is to coordinate an aggressive, collaborative approach to reduce the threat of wildland fire to communities and restore and maintain land health www.fireplan.gov.
- January 2001 Review and update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.
- August 2001, “Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment -10 Year Comprehensive Strategy” provides a foundation for wildland agencies to work closely with all levels of government, tribal, conservation, commodity groups, and community-based restoration groups to reduce the risk of wildland fire to communities and the environment.
- May 2002, “Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment, 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy – Implementation Plan.”
- August 2002, “Healthy Forests - An Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities.”
- 1994 Phillips Resource Area RMP
- Interdisciplinary Watershed Plans
- 1997 Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management
- 1978 Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, and 1993 update.

- June 2001, State Director’s Interim Guidance for Managing the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

B. Resource Management Plan Guidance

Wildland fire management activities within the Malta Field Office follow direction from the Montana Dakotas EA/Plan Amendment for Fire and Fuels Management (State Fire Plan), which amended fire management direction for all RMP’s.

The State Fire Plan designated fire suppression priorities and objectives for all areas. See the individual FMU (Fire Management Unit) descriptions in the column titled “Priorities” for the applicable suppression strategy for each FMU as dictated by the State Fire Plan.

C. Goals, Standards, Objectives, and/or Desired Future Condition

Specific resource-related fire objectives were listed in the proposed action that was adopted in the 2003 Decision Record. The specific objectives for fire management activities are listed in Appendix H.

In addition, site-specific objectives and desired future conditions for certain areas can be found in the following Interdisciplinary Watershed Plans:

1. Beauchamp Watershed, 2001
2. Telegraph Fourchette, 2002
3. Whitewater Waterched, 2004
4. Beaver Creek Watershed, 2004

III. Wildland Fire Management Strategies

A. General Management Considerations

In order to comply with: the current National Fire Plan; the Judith Valley Phillips RMP; Beauchamp, Telegraph Fourchette, Whitewater, and Beaver Creek Watershed Plans; and the Montana Dakotas EA/Plan Amendment for Fire and Fuels Management, the MaFO will:

- Use fire to restore and/or sustain ecosystem health based on sound scientific principles and information, balanced with other societal goals, including public health and safety, as well as air quality.
- Identify appropriate management response (AMR) goals, objectives, and constraints by, specific FMUs within the MFO. All wildland fire management activities will be managed as described in the FMU guidance outlined in Section III.
- Provide an AMR on all wildland fires, with emphasis on minimizing suppression costs, considering fire fighter and public safety, benefits and values to be protected consistent with resource objectives, standards and guidelines.
- Meet management goals and objectives through the use of prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, wildland fire for resource benefit, chemical treatment, biological treatment, and cultural treatment.
- Work collaboratively with communities at risk within the WUI to develop plans for risk reduction. The Federal Register Notice list is located at: <http://www.fireplan.gov/> and http://www.fireplan.gov/communities_at_risk.cfm and is not totally inclusive of all communities. . The Fire/Fuels Management Environmental Assessment Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (2003) also identified a list of some communities that are included within the MFO boundaries.
- Work collaboratively with federal, state, and local partners to develop cross boundary management strategies and prioritize cross agency fire management actions.

- Provide protection from wildland fire and wildland fire activities to all oil and gas infrastructure. Infrastructure includes pipelines, well heads, pump stations, other related out buildings and access road systems. Gas and oil wells, pipelines and other infrastructure is not inherently a fire hazard or a risk to start fires. These structures/systems do not provide increased suppression or fire prevention workload to the Zone fire program.

B. Wildland Fire Management Goals

The MFO will conduct all wildland fire management actions in compliance with the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Policy Update guiding principles. These principles are:

- Firefighter and public safety are the highest priority in every fire management activity.
- Assess risk to communities in terms of direct wildland fire impact and economic values, and implement effective programs to mitigate that risk through collaborative planning and projects.
- Implement the full range of wildland fire and fuels management practices, including prescribed fire, fire use, mechanical, chemical, biological, and cultural treatments that will move all affected landscapes toward desired future condition as described in the RMP.
- Establish partnerships with all interagency cooperators to facilitate coordinated fire management activities.
- Maintain an efficient and effective organization for the suppression of wildland fires consistent with the values at risk.
- Encourage close coordination and collaboration among specialists within and among MFO, federal employees, interested organizations, private landowners, state, and local partners.

- Develop and use the best scientific information available to deliver technical and community assistance to support ecological, economic, and social sustainability.
- Allow wildland fire to protect, maintain, and enhance resources, while being allowed to function in its ecological role when appropriate for the site and situation.
- Create an integrated approach to fire and resource management.

Specific fire programmatic direction for each Fire Management Unit (FMU) of the MFO is outlined in Chapter III Section D of the M-FMP.

C. Wildland Fire Management Options

The MFO will provide an AMR on all wildland fires, with emphasis on minimizing suppression costs, considering fire fighter and public safety, benefits and values to be protected consistent with resource objectives, standards, and guidelines. Responses to each wildland fire will be initiated in a timely manner with a force mix, based upon established fire management direction as documented in the approved RMPs. The use of appropriate management response will allow land managers to tailor preplanned wildland fire responses to meet objectives established in resource management plans and their associated implementation plans.

D. Fire Management Strategies by Fire Management Units

The Fire Management Plan establishes geographic areas as FMUs. In this section, the Fire Management Plan establishes prescriptive criteria and other guidance, which provide additional direction to allow managers to implement the objectives of the Resource Management Plans and activity-level plans for each FMU.

The following section contains FMU Matrices or each Malta FO FMU including a description of each FMU stating fire management objectives, constraints, and planned actions for that FMU:

Breaks, MaFO FMU 1

FMU Name / Number: Breaks MaFO / FMU 1 Size/Land Status: The area includes approximately 315,993 acres: BLM – 184,110; Bankhead-Jones – 10,767; state – 17,537; private – 102,284; water – 1,235 Last Revised: Feb. 2004			Field Office (FO): Malta (090) FO Manager: Mark Albers (406) 654-5113 Resource Advisor: Richard Adams (406) 654-5131 or Assigned Resource Specialist FO Fuels Management Specialist: Steve Knox (406) 538-1976 BLM Central Zone Fire Management Officer: Mitch Maycox (406) 538-1986		
Fire History (Reported by federal agencies)	Current Conditions, Vegetation	Desired Condition/ Resource Management Objectives	Potential Impacts from Unplanned Wild land Fire	Management Opportunities and/or Constraints	Priorities
1980 to 2003 Total Fires 55 Total Acres 8,124 Class A 10 fires .4 acres Class B 22 fires 56 acres Class C 13 fires 351 acres Class D 4 fires 606 acres Class F 1 fire 1100 acres Class G 1 fire 6000 acres	Soils in this area are mostly heavy clays with some Bearpaw shale's. Topography includes rolling ridge tops with moderate to deeply incised canyons between. Native vegetation is a mosaic of sagebrush grasslands, juniper communities with conifers. Some draws have minor discontinuous riparian communities. Vegetation on private land in the area includes rangeland, annual small grains, hay, or CRP. There are few permanent residences or other developed habitations. There are some producing gas wells and a delivery pipeline system in the region.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage for a mosaic of forage and cover types. 2. Management strategies should not aggravate the naturally high erosion rates. 3. Protect natural vegetation and land form characteristics. 4. Maintain native species while managing non-native weeds. 5. Manage diversified grasslands for livestock and wildlife forage, and nesting and rearing habitat. 6. Maintain sagebrush cover, diversity, and dispersion. 7. Protect maintain, and enhance crucial wildlife habitats, wetland and riparian habitats. 8. Maintain appropriate levels of livestock forage to minimize disturbance to current grazing systems. 9. Maintain appropriate amounts of thermal cover for critical wildlife. 	Special concerns and constraints include historic cabins, wildlife species, soil erosion, cultural, paleontological, and vegetative values that might be affected by fire fighting equipment, and the use of earth moving/tillage equipment.	<p>Suppression/Protection: Fire could be a positive influence and restoration of natural fire regimes will be encouraged where practical. However, each occurrence will have special consideration. Concerns include structural developments, crop lands, livestock and livestock forage needs. Social and political considerations will influence how each fire will be managed. Limited suppression based on current fire danger, resource availability and predicted weather may be used to ensure safety of fire suppression personal, reduce cost of fire suppression, and provide an opportunity to return fire to the landscape. Only natural fire occurrences (lightning) will be used for limited suppression.</p> <p>Restoration: Restoration will focus on rangeland and forest health, maintaining vegetative diversity by reducing conifer encroachment into meadows and by rejuvenating and increasing deciduous trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Prescribed Fire: Emphasis would be on maintaining native vegetation diversity and health.</p> <p>Fuels Treatments: The majority of treatments would be prescribed fire.</p>	<p>Emphasis on protection of life, property , Improvements and resources.</p> <p>Multiple fire protection priority: Moderate, appropriate suppression.</p> <p>Rehabilitation and Restoration priority: Moderate, initial suppression damage will be rehabilitated immediately.</p> <p>Fuels Buildup: Moderate to heavy in forested areas.</p> <p>Noxious Weeds: Priority will be to mitigate implementation activities to reduce the chance of new infestations of noxious weeds. Pre- and postburn treat in prescribed fire areas; postburn treat in wildland fire areas.</p>

Prairie Potholes, MaFO FMU 2

FMU Name / Number: Prairie Potholes MaFO / FMU 2 Size/Land Status: The area includes approximately 2,609,649 acres: BLM – 397,086; Bankhead-Jones – 472,769; USFWS – 1006; Military Reservations – 38; state – 234,559; private – 1,490,070; water – 14,121 Last Revised: February 5, 2004			Field Office (FO): Malta (090) FO Manager: Mark Albers (406) 654-5113 Resource Advisor: Richard Adams (406) 654-5131 or Assigned Resource Specialist FO Fuels Management Specialist: Steve Knox (406) 538-1976 BLM Central Zone Fire Management Officer: Mitch Maycox (406) 538-1986		
Fire History (Reported by federal agencies)	Current Conditions, Vegetation	Desired Condition/ Resource Management Objectives	Potential Impacts from Unplanned Wildland Fire	Management Opportunities and/or Constraints	Priorities
1980 to 2003 Total Fires 22 Total Acres 19,770 Class A 1 fire <.25 acres Class B 6 fires 16 acres Class C 3 fires 165 acres Class D 3 fires 560 acres Class E 6 fires 3067 acres Class F 5 fires 7602 acres Class G 1 fire 8360 acres	<p>This polygon encompasses the upland plains and glaciated areas north of the Milk River corridor. A large amount of public land is scattered in small tracts or modest sized blocks. This area is commonly referred to as Prairie Potholes and is rolling uplands of silty soils, numerous streams, pits, and reservoirs. Private land is farmed for irrigated hay, grain crops, and CRP. Numerous crested wheatgrass seedlings occur on both private and public land.</p> <p>Native vegetation is mid and short grass prairies on the uplands. Woody draws and pseudo riparian communities are in draws in the lowlands and coulees.</p> <p>Only small tracts of public land remain in the Milk River corridor. Crop production includes hay, small grains, potatoes, corn, and other dry land crops as well as irrigated crop production. Mature cottonwood forests are common along the river corridor.</p> <p>Water sources within the area include small reservoirs, water-savers, wells, pipelines, and natural streams and rivers.</p> <p>Communities and isolated ranches occur adjacent to public lands. Typically these interface areas are surrounded by scattered grass and sage brush vegetation or crop lands.</p> <p>This FMU contains the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC identified for its outstanding cultural resource values. The Bitter Creek WSA is also within this FMU.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining native species where they currently exist while managing non-native weeds. 2. Managing for diversified grasslands which provide livestock and wildlife forage, and nesting and rearing habitat. 3. Managing the uplands' riparian and wetlands for proper functioning condition. 4. Managed for diversified grasslands to provide livestock and antelope forage, nesting and rearing habitat for birds. 5. Manage for high quality grasslands with nesting cover for waterfowl and upland birds, escape cover and space for other wildlife. 	<p>High value private and state land is adjacent to public lands. Forage production, weed control, riparian areas, wildlife habitat on public lands as well as crop and forage production on adjacent private lands will all require fire management consideration.</p> <p>Special consideration to the resource values found in the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC and the Bitter Creek WSA need to be taken in the event of an unplanned wildland fire. Examples of these considerations include: use of minimum impact suppression tactics, limiting/restricting use of mechanized equipment, and the mobilization of a Resource Advisor to the fire location.</p>	<p>Suppression/Protection: Outside of the Bitter Creek WSA, wildland fire is not desired due to the large amount of private and state land and agricultural production throughout the area. Unplanned fire events will be aggressively suppressed while allowing for fire fighter and public safety as the top priority.</p> <p>Within the Bitter Creek WSA, appropriate fire management responses may be taken to allow fire to play, as nearly as possible, its natural ecological role. Fire suppression methods within the WSA will include minimum impact tactics. The use of mechanized equipment within the WSA is prohibited unless authorized by the Malta Field Manager.</p> <p>Restoration: Restoration efforts in this FMU will be focused on rangeland health. Limited opportunities for treating riparian and forested areas may exist. Restoration activities will be based on careful consideration of resource objectives, area concerns, and constraints.</p> <p>Prescribed Fire: Prescribed fire may be used based on management direction and the ability to reach formal agreement with adjacent landowners. Emphasis will be placed on maintaining native vegetative diversity and health..</p> <p>Fuels Treatments: Fuels treatments within this FMU would primarily consist of prescribed fire. Potentially, use of livestock could also be incorporated.</p>	<p>Emphasis on prevention, education, and suppression.</p> <p>Multiple fire protection priority: High</p> <p>Rehabilitation: Moderate. Impacts caused by fire suppression will be rehabilitated immediately. A Resource Advisor will be dispatched to fires occurring within the WSA or ACEC.</p> <p>Fuels Buildup: Low to moderate. Prescribed fire and livestock management may be used to achieve desired plant communities and to reduce hazardous fuel loads.</p> <p>Noxious Weeds: Priority will be to mitigate implementation activities to reduce the chance of new infestations of noxious weeds. Pre- and postburn treat in prescribed fire areas; postburn treat in wildland fire areas.</p>

Little Rockies, MaFO FMU 3

FMU Name / Number: Little Rockies MaFO / FMU 3 Size/Land Status: The area includes approximately 65,137 acres: BLM – 30,055; state – 1751; private – 33,238; water - 93 Last Revised: January 27, 2004			Field Office (FO): Malta (090) FO Manager: Mark Albers (406) 654-5113 Resource Advisor: Richard Adams (406) 654-5131 or Assigned Resource Specialist FO Fuels Management Specialist: Steve Knox (406)538-1976 BLM Central Zone Fire Management Officer: Mitch Maycox (406) 538-1986		
Fire History (Reported by federal agencies)	Current Conditions, Vegetation	Desired Condition/ Resource Management Objectives	Potential Impacts from Unplanned Wildland Fire	Management Opportunities and/or Constraints	Priorities
1980 to 2003 Total Fires 55 Total Acres 13,335 Class A 20 fires 1.1 acres Class B 20 fires 33 acres Class C 7 fires 166 acres Class D 4 fires 805 acres Class E 1 fire 780 acres Class G 2 fires 11,550 acres	<p>Blocks of BLM land are surrounded by private and/or Fort Belknap Reservation land. These areas are mountainous with steep slopes and heavy timber. Commercial timber is abundant with some Douglas-fir on the north slopes, ponderosa pine and lodgepole on the south slopes, and lodgepole pine at the highest elevations. Riparian vegetation occurs along numerous small streams and drainages. There are interspersed grassy meadows within the timber types.</p> <p>Dry perennial grasslands are interspersed with the timber at lower elevations and where soils are shallow. At higher elevations such grasslands may include wet meadows.</p> <p>Grasslands in the south half of the FMU often include a mix of native species (western and bluebunch wheatgrass; rough and Idaho fescue; bluegrasses; little bluestem) and naturalized exotics (primarily smooth brome and timothy). Dry shrubs, such as Wyoming big sagebrush, rabbit brushes, snowberry and native rose occur on the grass-timber ecotone or within the grasslands.</p> <p>Secondary roads intersect the area. There are also numerous roads from past mining activities.</p> <p>Water sources within the area include small reservoirs, water-savers, wells, pipelines, and natural streams and rivers.</p> <p>Several ranches are built adjacent to public lands containing timber and steep slopes. Two small communities, Landusky and Zortman are at high risk because of proximity to heavy forest fuels and narrow, one-way access.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage native vegetation to meet standards for rangeland health. 2. Maintain stable soils and sustain current land uses. 3. Maintain sagebrush habitats, especially those in sage grouse nesting and wintering areas and big game concentration areas the maximum extent possible. 4. Maintain scattered stands of ponderosa pine. 5. Reduce the risk of large, catastrophic fires in forested areas. 6. Restore forest structure and vegetative diversity to within the historic range of variation. 	<p>Obvious concerns include threats to the towns of Zortman and Landusky which have been identified as being at risk of wildland fire. Additional threats are present to residential and ranch structures, crop lands, and livestock forage typical of rural intermix.</p> <p>Private and public timberlands throughout the FMU are at moderate to high risk for stand-replacing fire, due to fuel buildup from fire exclusion, past logging practices, and unnaturally dense forests.</p> <p>Concerns and constraints include scattered land pattern, proximity of public and private lands, lands with cultural, paleontological, and vegetative values that might be damaged by high intensity wildland fire and fire suppression activities.</p> <p>Wildlife habitat for deer, antelope, elk, upland birds, and songbirds is also a concern.</p>	<p>Suppression/Protection: Wildland fire is not desired due to the high risk of stand-replacing fires, high resource values, and threats to private and state land throughout the area. Management of unplanned fire occurrence would be based on values at risk, current and predicted weather and current land management direction.</p> <p>Restoration: Restoration will focus on rangeland and forest health, maintaining vegetative diversity by reducing conifer encroachment into meadows and by rejuvenating and increasing deciduous trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Prescribed fire: Prescribed fire will be used to reduce hazardous fuels and restore or maintain vegetative diversity, wildlife habitat and forage values based on management direction and agreements with adjacent landowners.</p> <p>Fuels Treatments: Mechanical and/or manual treatments will be used in areas where prescribed fire cannot be safely or effectively used as a first entry, or where sale of forest products may offset the overall cost of treatments and provide economic benefit to local communities.</p>	<p>Emphasis on mitigation, prevention, education, and suppression.</p> <p>Multiple fire protection priority: High</p> <p>Rehabilitation : Moderate, initial suppression damage will be rehabilitated immediately.</p> <p>Fuels Buildup: Generally high in forested areas; low to moderate in grass and shrub lands.</p> <p>Noxious Weeds: Mitigate implementation activities to reduce the chance of new infestations of noxious weeds. Certified weed-free seed will be used, and seeding with appropriate native plant species will be required.</p>

Eastern Plains, MaFO FMU 4

FMU Name / Number: Eastern Plains MaFO / FMU 4 Size/Land Status: The area includes approximately 2,182,122 acres: BLM – 763,712; Bankhead-Jones – 218,969; USFWS – 10,482; Military Reservations – 1,524; state – 125,560; private – 1,039,922; water – 21,953 Last Revised: January 8,2004			Field Office (FO): Malta (090) FO Manager: Mark Albers (406) 654-5113 Resource Advisor: Richard Adams (406) 654-5131 or Assigned Resource Specialist FO Fuels Management Specialist: Steve Knox (406)538-1976 BLM Central Zone Fire Management Officer: Mitch Maycox (406) 538-1986		
Fire History (Reported by federal agencies)	Current Conditions, Vegetation	Desired Condition/ Resource Management Objectives	Potential Impacts from Unplanned Wildland Fire	Management Opportunities and/or Constraints	Priorities
1980 to 2003 Total Fires 90 Total Acres 15,534 Class A 18 fires 1 acre Class B 24 fires 80 Class C 27 fires 1,046 Class D 11 fires 2,068 acres Class E 6 fires 3,220 acres Class F 4 fires 9,118 acres	<p>Eastern Plains FMU is the southern half of Valley and Phillips counties. The northern border is the Milk River. This river divides the soil type therefore changing vegetative characteristics from the Prairie Potholes FMU. The soil type in the Eastern Prairie transitions from glaciated to sedimentary thus producing a sagebrush grassland plant community. Private land is farmed for irrigated hay, grain crops, and CRP. Crested wheatgrass occurs on both private and public land.</p> <p>Only small tracts of public land remain in the Milk River Corridor. Crop production includes hay, small grains, potatoes, corn, and other dry land crops as well as irrigated crop production. Mature cottonwood forests are common along the river corridor.</p> <p>Water sources within the area include small reservoirs, water-savers, wells, pipelines, and natural streams and rivers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage for high quality grasslands with nesting cover for waterfowl and upland birds, escape cover and space for other wildlife. 2. Maintain native species where they currently exist while managing non-native weeds. 3. Managing for diversified grasslands which provide livestock and wildlife forage, and nesting and rearing habitat. 4. The uplands, riparian and wetlands areas should be managed for proper functioning condition. 	<p>High value private and state land is adjacent to public lands. Forage production, weed control, riparian areas, wildlife habitat on public lands as well as crop and forage production on adjacent private lands will require fire management consideration.</p> <p>Communities and isolated ranches occur adjacent to public lands. Typically these interface areas are surrounded by scattered grass and sage brush vegetation or crop lands.</p> <p>Identified communities at risk from wildland fire are Saco and Hinsdale.</p>	<p>Suppression/Protection: Wildland fire should not be used to manage hazardous fuel due to large amounts of private land and rural home sites. In the Burnt Lodge WSA all suppression activities will follow the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review. Mountain Plover ACEC will not be used as a fire staging area April 1- July 31st. In the south western part of Valley county the county has initial attack suppression responsibilities.</p> <p>Restoration: Restoration will focus on rangeland and forest health, maintaining vegetative diversity by reducing conifer encroachment into meadows and by rejuvenating and increasing deciduous trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Prescribed fire: Prescribed fire would be used based on management direction and agreements with adjacent landowners. Prescribed burning could be conducted in the Mountain Plover ACEC to improved habitat and have no negative impacts on plovers.</p> <p>Fuels Treatments: Coordinate fuels management with private landowners, affected interests, and other agencies.</p>	<p>Emphasis on prevention, education, and suppression.</p> <p>Multiple fire protection priority: High</p> <p>Rehabilitation and Restoration priority: Moderate, initial suppression damage will be rehabilitated immediately.</p> <p>Fuels Buildup: Generally low to moderate in the shrub and grasslands.</p> <p>Noxious Weeds: Mitigate implementation activities to reduce the chance of new infestation of noxious weeds. Certified weed-free seed will be used, and seeding with appropriate native plant species will be required.</p>

Monument FMU 8

FMU Name / Number: Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument / FMU 5 Size/Land Status: The area includes approximately 506,129 acres: BLM - 367,228; Bankhead-Jones – 7,209; state - 38,770; private - 79,872; USFWS - 436; water - 12,578 Last Revised: Feb. 2004			Field Office (FO): Lewistown (060) Monument Manager: Gary Slagel (406) 538-1950 Resource Advisor: LFO or MaFO Resource Specialist FO Fuels Management Specialist: Steve Knox (406) 538-1976 BLM Central Zone Fire Management Officer: Mitch Maycox (406) 538-1986		
Fire History (Reported by federal agencies)	Current Conditions, Vegetation	Desired Condition/ Resource Management Objectives	Potential Impacts from Unplanned Wild land Fire	Management Opportunities and/or Constraints	Priorities
1980 to 2003 Total fires 154 Total acres 13,588 Class A 34 fires 2 acres Class B 79 fires 170 acres Class C 24 fires 665 acres Class D 6 fires 884 acres Class E 6 fires 3321 acres Class F 3 fires 7600 acres	The land form is a series of drainages and ridges running mostly north to south. The area is made up of rolling upland plateaus with moderate to deeply incised canyons. Some of the private uplands are an annual cereal crop production and some are in the Conservation Reserve Program. Native vegetation is primarily sage brush and sage brush grasslands verging into Ponderosa Pine, Douglas-fir, and juniper communities. Riparian vegetation including native shrubs and Cottonwood trees exists along the Missouri river and drainages throughout this polygon. Water sources within the area include small reservoirs, water-savers, wells, pipelines, and natural streams and rivers. Access in this area depends on the weather as roads become difficult to drive with precipitation. Ranches and recreation areas are scattered along the Missouri River. Ranches are located throughout the Breaks polygon. Vegetation consists of grass and sagebrush lands with scattered pockets of timber and crop lands near most ranches. Recreation sites along the Missouri River include the Richard Wood Watchable Wildlife area, Coal Banks Landing, Judith Landing, Stafford Ferry, and James Kipp Park.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage for sagebrush grassland and Missouri Breaks interface to provide season long forage for wildlife. 2. Limit or minimize erosion. 3. Manage native vegetation to meet standards for rangeland health. 4. Maintain stable soils and sustain current land uses. 5. Maintain sagebrush habitats, especially those in identified sage grouse nesting and wintering areas and big game concentration areas to the maximum extent possible. 6. Scattered stands of Ponderosa Pine, especially those exhibiting old growth characteristics, shall be maintained where possible. 	Concerns include the presence of elk, mule deer, and Bighorn sheep; the mix of public and private land with crop production; difficult access; ACECs with cultural, paleontological, and vegetative values that might be accessed by fire fighting equipment; the presence of Bald Eagle and Pallid Sturgeon; and the use of earth moving/tillage equipment in the Wilderness Study Areas. Sensitive areas for cultural resources include the Cow Creek ACEC, Nez Perce National Historic Trail. This area has historical values with the Nez Perce and Lewis and Clark Trails and its diverse wildlife populations. WSAs include Woodhawk, Dog Creek, Stafford, Ervin Ridge, and Cow Creek.	Suppression/Protection: The BLM will suppress fires at minimum cost considering fire fighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected. Appropriate management responses to wild land fire in the monument, including the wilderness study areas, will include traditional fire line tactics, including the use of natural barriers and hand constructed fire line. The application of fire retardant will be prohibited within the White Cliffs section of the monument Restoration: Restoration will focus on rangeland and forest health, maintaining vegetative diversity by reducing conifer encroachment into meadows and by rejuvenating and increasing deciduous trees and shrubs. Prescribed fire: Prescription burns will be pursued in the monument to protect infrastructure or wildlife habitat that would be permanently lost in the event of a catastrophic wild fire. Fuels Treatments: The BLM will coordinate fuel management with private landowners, affected interests, and other agencies. Land uses will be monitored and adjusted as necessary after a fire.	Multiple fire protection priority: Moderate Rehabilitation and Restoration priority: Staging areas and fire camps will be placed outside the monument wherever possible. Using earth moving/tillage equipment is prohibited for wild land fire suppression in the monument, unless waived by the authorized officer. Fuels Buildup: Prescribed fire may be used to achieve desired plant communities and to reduce hazardous fuel loads Noxious Weeds: Priority will be to mitigate implementation activities to reduce the chance of new infestations of noxious weeds. Pre- and postburn treat in prescribed fire areas; postburn treat in wildland fire areas.

IV. Fire Management Components:

A. Wildland Fire Suppression

The Malta FMP is based on the concept that all wildland fires will be subject to an initial response (Initial Action). Copies of the agreement outlining constraints and management objectives will be developed and made available to cooperators who provide suppression services.

1. Fire Planning Unit Fire History

Refer to matrices on pages 4 -8 of this document.

2. Suppression and Preparedness Actions

All wildland fire suppression and preparedness actions will follow policy and guidance provided in but not limited to:

- National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy
- 2003 Fire/Fuels Management Plan for Montana and the Dakotas
- Current Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Operations Handbook

The Central Zone's fire suppression/operations resources are based in Lewistown at the Central Zone Fire Complex located at the Lewistown Airport and the Little Rockies Fire Station located just north of Zortman Montana. The current list of resources includes:

Lewistown

- Zone FMO
- Zone AFMO
- Lewistown FOS
- Dispatch Center Manager
- 3 IA/Aviation Dispatchers
- Zone Warehouse Manager
- Helicopter Module (7 person)
- Single Engine Airtanker Manager
- 1 type 4 Engine w/ 7 person crew
- 3 type 6 Engines w/ 5 person crew
- 1 type 1 water tender w/ 2 person crew
- 1 exclusive use Air Attack platform w/collateral duty or detailed ATGS
- 1 CWN Single Engine Airtanker as needed
- 1 exclusive use Type III helicopter (mid July-September)

Lewistown personnel - 40

Zortman

- Zortman FOS
- 1 type 4 Engine w/ 7 person crew

- 2 type 6 Engines w/ 5 person crew
- Zortman personnel – 18

Total Central Zone Personnel - 56

Historically our goal is to be fully staffed and fire ready by the Memorial Day weekend and reducing our operations staff/resources by September 30th.

All Initial Actions for wildland fires on BLM lands within the Central Zone will utilize appropriate response concepts based on Firefighter safety, available resources, and guidance provided by appropriate land management plans and assigned Resource Advisors. Dispatching Run Cards are developed and in use by Lewistown Interagency Dispatch to assist in making appropriate response decisions.

To provide for safe and efficient wildfire suppression/management, interagency cooperation is essential within the Central Zone. Our primary cooperators include:

- Lewis & Clark N.F
- Charles M. Russell N.W.R
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
- County Fire Wardens and Volunteer Departments and Districts:
 - Blaine County (Havre FS)
 - Cascade County (Great Falls FS)
 - Chouteau County (Havre FS)
 - Fergus County (Lewistown FO)
 - Glacier County (Havre FS)
 - Golden Valley County (Billings FO & Musselshell RD)
 - Hill County (Havre FS)
 - Judith Basin County (Lewistown FO)
 - Lewis & Clark County, North (Great Falls FS)
 - Liberty County (Havre FS)
 - Meagher County (Lewistown FO)
 - Petroleum County (Lewistown FO)
 - Phillips County (Malta FO)
 - Pondera County (Lewistown FO)
 - Teton County (Lewistown FO)
 - Toole County (Havre FS)
 - Valley County (Glasgow FS)

Due to the large number of local firefighters from organized departments and from the public at large, and due to personnel that may or may not be aware of site specific suppression objectives and/or

limitations, it is imperative that a qualified Incident Commander and Resource Advisor arrive on scene in a timely manner.

The Central Zone is also responsible by agreement for initial attack on USFS lands in the Big and Little Snowy Mountains (Musselshell & Judith Ranger Districts). We also provide initial attack on wildland fires, under offset agreements for parts of Blaine, Phillips and Valley Counties. For further information, reference the current listed agreements:

- Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement (A.K.A Six Party Agreement)
- Annual Operating Plan between Lewis & Clark NF and Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office.
- Memorandum of Understandings with Blaine, Phillips, and Valley Counties.

3. Fire Prevention, Community Assistance, and Education

a. Fire Prevention

With an average of only two human-caused fires every 10 years on BLM-managed land, fire prevention on federal land does not receive a large emphasis. Prevention efforts are focused primarily on the small section of the Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River Corridor, before it enters the C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR). Most of the human-caused fires that occur on public land result from recreationists in the CMR; human ignitions on BLM-managed land are rare. Prohibition of the use of fireworks, tracer ammunition, and burning of hazardous or explosives materials on any BLM land has recently been enacted by the State Director.

Human-caused fires occur on private land within the field office, primarily as a result of debris burning or agricultural operations. Thus, the primary focus of prevention activities is cooperation with, and support of, local and state entities. Central Fire Zone personnel working with personnel from the Montana DNRC - Northeastern Land Office, handle the coordination of fire restrictions among all federal, state, tribal, and county agencies in a 13 county area of northeastern Montana. The Lewistown Area Restrictions Plan can be found in Appendix G.

Imposition of Stage I or Stage II fire restrictions is based on consensus of county, state, tribal, and county administrators who participate in a weekly

conference call. If a change in the fire restrictions level is proposed, DNRC personnel make contact with county administrators who were not present on the conference call; Central Zone personnel make contact with federal administrators who were not present. Production and distribution of news releases regarding fire restrictions activities to print, radio, and television media is handled by the Central Fire Zone personnel. Participation from the counties within the Malta Field Office has been relatively good in past years.

In general, closures are limited to safety concerns associated with an ongoing incident. General closures are not used as part of the fire prevention program because of the scattered land ownership patterns for both federal and state lands within the field office. This pattern makes a general closure for public lands unenforceable. Though some large, contiguous areas of public land occur in the Malta Field Office, any closure, if enacted for prevention purposes, would be done on a local area basis where feasible and warranted, as opposed to trying to close all public lands in the field office. The only exception to this guideline would occur if all state and private lands in an area are closed by order of the governor of Montana, in which case, federal lands would be closed as well. Such an event occurred during the summer of 2000.

b. Community Assistance

Community Assistance activities potentially cover 14 counties within the Lewistown Field Office. Assistance to communities focuses on fire hazard assessment and mitigation planning, hazardous fuel reduction, natural resource-based economic development, fire education, and Rural Fire Assistance.

An assistance agreement for assessments, planning, hazardous fuel reduction and landowner education has been signed with Phillips Conservation District, covering all of Phillips County. Partnering entities in the counties include both conservation districts and county government.

Projects currently underway through the assistance agreements include hazardous fuel reduction and county-wide fire mitigation assessment and planning. The fire mitigation planning is being completed in cooperation with Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES). The assistance agreement with Phillips Conservation District serves as the fiscal vehicle for completion of mitigation plans for Phillips, Blaine, and Hill counties. (Blaine and Hill are in the adjacent field office area.)

c. Education

Education activities are primarily directed at landowners and residents regarding defensible space and wildland fire preparation. Personnel stationed at the Zortman Fire Station have recently begun a program to provide individual home assessments, using MT DNRC forms, for residents of Zortman and Landusky, the two communities with the greatest risk from wildland fire in the field office area.

Landowner education is also pursued opportunistically in the course of: providing support to community assistance agreements; implementing fuels treatments on federal land; and conducting NEPA assessments.

4. Fire Training

Fire Training is provided as appropriate for all employees assigned to offices within the Central Zone. We have a standing Red Card/Training Committee in our Zone. The Committee is made up of:

- Zone Fire Management Officer
- Zone Fire Training Officer (Collateral Duty)
- Red Card Administrator (Collateral Duty)
- One Representative from each office
- One Line Officer or their Representative

The Zone Red Card/Training Committee meets as needed to prioritize training requests, make recommendations to the Zone FMO before final certification, and to address any other Red Card/Fire Training issues.

All decisions are based on, efficiency of the service and the long term needs of the Zone, Regional, and National fire program. Guide and Manuals that are used include, but are not limited to:

- NWCG 310-2 Guide
- Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Handbook
- Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide
- DOI DM 350-354 & 9400 Manual

Most 100-200 level training will be taught within the Central Zone. These courses will be open to interagency partners but Montana BLM employees will receive priority. The local training schedule will be established by mid March and will be posted on the Northern Rockies Eastern Zone training web site.

The Central Zone participates in the Northern Rockies training program where we are a part of

the Northern Rockies Eastern Zone. All 300 level and above training must be routed through the Northern Rockies Eastern Zone Training Committee and follow established procedures as shown in:

Eastern Zone Training Committee S.O.P

In late March, each Zone will compile a needs analysis for the subsequent training season (following fiscal year).

All original training certifications are to be kept by the employee with copies kept in a master training file maintained by the Red Card Administrator.

a. Qualifications and Fire Line Refresher

All qualifications will follow established interagency standards and will be certified by the Zone Fire Management Officer or State Fire Management Officer as appropriate. All Fire Training records are maintained by the Zone Red Card Administrator with medical related records kept in the employee's master file located at the Montana State Office. Task Books will be issued and initiated by the Zone Fire Training Officer following NWCG Task Book Administrators Guide.

Fire Line Refresher training will be provided in the spring for Central Zone employees by Central Zone fire staff. All reasonable efforts will be made to provide an adequate number of training sessions in locations that allow each employee and office the chance to participate. Work Capacity Tests will also be provided as appropriate following current Bureau guidelines.

b. Fire Season Readiness

No Central Zone fire staff or other personnel will participate in wildfire or prescribed fire activities until all required recurrence standards are met. Fire season readiness may be adversely effected do to reduction in percentage of M.E.L /Work months. The goal is to have all equipment, plans, and staff 100% fire ready by Memorial Day weekend and to maintain the option for 7 day staffing through Labor Day weekend. Typically we start losing summer seasonal employees around mid August, which reduces our readiness and ability to provide resources for out of Zone assignment or details to some degree.

The Zone Fire Management staff will keep Line Management and State Office Fire Staff apprised of any fire readiness issues in a timely manner.

5. Detection

Wildland fire detection within the Zone is provided by a combination of ground and aerial means, including fire reports from the public, law enforcement, and government employee's year-round. Due to the topography and modern communication systems, the majority of actively burning wildfires are reported by the public, typically to the county sheriff's office, then relayed to the appropriate fire dispatch center. The exception to this is when aerial recon detects a wildfire, in which case the report is made directly to Lewistown Interagency Dispatch.

During times of high fire danger or after lighting activity the BLM will actively search for new starts using both ground patrols and aerial detection flights. The goal of these patrols is to have ground based firefighters and aerial supervision dispersed in order to increase the probability of preventing an escaped wildland fire.

6. Fire Weather and Fire Danger

Table IV A6 displays the nine Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) that are maintained by the Central Montana Fire Zone (CMFZ). The CMFZ owns one portable RAWS station that may be installed to provide site specific weather

information for projects where permanent RAWS information is not sufficient to collect needed data for a specific site.

Lewistown Fire Dispatch Center is responsible for recurrent daily activities to manage RAWS data and the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS). These activities include input of key dates to initiate seasonal data collection and termination; correction of observed weather observations to insure accurate data is input into NFDRS; and calculation/communication of the daily fire danger rating(s) throughout the zone (See Appendix X, Fire Danger Operating Plan).

All the listed RAWS stations, with the exception of Little Bullwacker, Bluff Creek, and Little Snowy, use NFDRS Fuel Model C along with the Energy Release Component (ERC) to develop fire danger ratings on a daily basis. Little Bullwacker and Bluff Creek use NFDRS Fuel Model L along with ERC, and Little Snowy uses Fuel Model H and a Burning Index (BI) to calculate the daily fire danger rating.

Daily fire weather forecasts are obtained twice daily throughout the fire season from the National Weather Service (NWS). These forecasts may be obtained via the internet at the following web address: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov>

Table IV A6: BLM RAWS STATIONS

Name	NWS ID	NESDIS ID	Elevation	Latitude	Longitude
Little Bullwacker	240704	3256C488	3100	47.8130	109.0160
Zortman Mine	240807	324AE466	4660	47.9220	108.5520
Manning Corral	240809	3276659E	3080	47.7020	108.4780
Bluff Creek	240902	327676E8	2550	48.8710	106.9450
King Coulee	240903	3276866C	2760	47.7980	107.0230
Armells	242205	32544768	2820	47.5830	108.8690
Little Snowy	242207	3256277A	4975	46.7510	109.0230
Chain Butte	242302	325196C0	2928	47.5160	108.0330
Dry Blood Creek	242303	3276951A	3000	47.2430	108.3570

7. Aviation Management

All aviation activities within the Central Zone will follow Departmental, Agency, State Office, and Zone policies and guidelines. The documents that are commonly used include, but are not limited to:

- 9400 Manual
- BLM National Aviation Plan
- BLM Montana Aviation Plan
- Central Montana Zone Aviation Plan

- IHOG
- ATGS Guide
- SEAT Guide

The Central Montana Zone aviation management personnel are as follows.

- Zone Aviation Manager = Zone FMO
- Acting Unit Aviation Officer = Zone AFMO
- Aviation Dispatcher = Lewistown Dispatch Aviation Dispatcher

- Helicopter Operations = Lewistown Helitack Crew Leader
- Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) Operations = Lewistown SEAT Manager

The standard complement of initial attack aircraft include:

- Type 1 Air Attack Platform with ATGS
- Type III Helicopter with IA Module
- Single Engine Air Tanker with support crew and manager

As warranted for extended attack or large fire support additional aircraft to consider include:

- Recon Platform with Observer
- Additional Type III Helicopter with IA Module
- Type II Helicopter, for crew transport/bucket work
- Additional SEAT's
- Additional ATGS Platform with ATGS

Aerial delivery of firefighters and aerial supervision have proven to be key components in a safe and efficient initial attack program. Providing local Management oversight is facilitated by using local Fire Managers as ATGS's or aerial observers. This management oversight is also beneficial in determining when less than full suppression actions are warranted.

8. Initial Attack

Initial Attack within the Central Zone is based on the closest resource concept and utilizing the most appropriate qualified resources. This includes working as partners with local government and state resources. Appropriate response guidelines will be followed. **At no time will Fire Fighter or Public safety be knowingly compromised.** All actions will comply with Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book) as listed in Chapter 9: Initial Attack.

Lewistown Interagency Dispatch (LID) will be responsible for all IA dispatching functions as listed in the following documents:

- Lewistown Interagency Dispatch Operations Plan
- Eastern Montana Zone MOB Guide
- Northern Rockies MOB Guide
- Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations

On duty Dispatchers will dispatch IA resources utilizing the established Run Cards and will keep

the Duty Officer informed on the status of all fires within Zone.

All ground and aviation IA actions will comply with current BLM Red Book Standards including but not limited to the following:

- Daily AM briefings including weather, safety, and current situation.
- Utilizing appropriate Incident Commander based on complexity analysis.

9. Extended Attack and Large Fire Suppression

Extended Attack fires will be managed by an appropriate and qualified Type III organization using the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Complexity Analyses. Line Manager Involvement will be required and a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (W.F.S.A) will be completed and followed.

The following is a possible team configuration for a basic Type III incident.

- 1ea - Type III IC
- 2 to 4 - DIVS/Task Force Leader/Strike Team Leaders
- 1ea - Type III Safety Officer
- 1ea - Logistics Person
- 1ea - Finance Person
- 1ea - Camp Boss/Staging Area Manager

Consideration should be made to request the Eastern Montana C.A.T if available and with feedback from the DNRC FMO and the Team IC.

Training opportunities on incidents should be considered only with fully qualified trainers and trainees.

B. Wildland Fire Use

Wildland fire use will not be part of the fire management strategy in the Malta Field Office for the following reasons:

- Flashy fuels and periodic high wind events make it difficult to hold fires to a predetermined area or size.
- Inter-mixed BLM, private, and other agency lands make it difficult to allow fire to burn under fire use without affecting those other lands.
- Most BLM land is under grazing allotments; allowing fires to burn under a fire use plan could significantly reduce grazing during at least two growing seasons.

C. Prescribed Fire

1. Planning and Documentation

a. Summary of Prescribed Fire Program Planning

All prescribed fire projects include pre/post project criteria. For information specific to any prescribed fire project refer to the project burn plan.

The Central Montana Zone (CMZ) prescribed fire program is an interdisciplinary activity with a basis to treat natural and activity fuel accumulations to meet resource objectives, standards for rangeland health as outlined in the RMPs, Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/plan Amendment, and project level EAs. These documents permit the use of management-ignited fire on BLM lands in the Malta Field Office. Treatments have historically included hazardous fuels reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, range improvement, and reduction of activity fuels.

The development of prescribed fire treatments is typically accomplished one to three years in advance of implementation. Field reconnaissance and interdisciplinary analysis is completed one to two years in advance of project implementation.

To be more cost effective project analysis may cover multi-year treatment on the scale of several thousand acres. Sub-units are used in project implementation to provide additional flexibility by taking advantage of favorable sites and seasonal windows for treatment.

The CMZ develops out-year program planning and budgeting information for prescribed fire treatments in accordance with RMPs and project

level EAs. Projects will be identified in the Risk Assessment Mitigation Strategy (RAMS).

Project implementation is prioritized as follows:

1. Wildland/Urban interface area.
2. Forest Health and Restoration (areas that are currently in condition class 2 or 3).
3. Watershed Structure and Integrity
4. Maintain areas that are currently in condition class 1.

The CMZ fire program maintains 1 plastic sphere dispenser and various types of ignition torches (drip torches-25, panama-3). This equipment is constantly being maintained due to its year round use.

All prescribed fire plans have pre/post project criteria or silvicultural prescriptions. For specific action items refer to project level EAs and individual prescribed fire burn plans.

The 1998 BLM Handbook 9214 "Prescribed Fire Manual" provides specific guidance for the prescribed fire program. It covers guidance, planning, prescribed fire plan requirements, determination complexity, safety and qualifications, project finance, cooperation and assistance, escape fires, and reporting.

Table IV Ca on the following page summarizes prescribed fire projects.

b. Required Qualified Personnel

Only Qualified personnel will participate in the implementation of prescribed fire and fuels implementation projects. A list of qualified personal is available in the CMZ dispatch office. Estimating the out-year work load, the needed positions are shown below in Table IV Cb.

Table IV Cb - Required Qualified Personnel

	Fuels Management Specialist	Fuels Technician	Planning and environmental Coordinator	Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist	RXB1	RXB2	RXI2
Current positions	4			1	1	2	6
Needed positions		3	1		2	3	10

Table IV Ca

*The values are subject to change with additional planning, evaluation, and unforeseeable constraints.

Prescribed Fire Projects						
Project Name	FMU	Acres*	Current * Condition Class (acres)	Projected * Condition Class 2(acres)	Projected * Condition Class 1 (acres)	Local Contractor
Cyprian Creek	Breaks	1,200	2-750		500	N/A
Ferry Plant	Breaks	1,400	2-800 3-300	200	300	N/A
Little Rockies LUP	Little Rockies	10,000	2-5,500 3-3,500	2,200	500	N/A
Little Rockies WUI	Little Rockies	2,000	2-300 3-1,300	1,200	100	N/A
Milk River Riparian	Eastern Plains	350	2-275		125	
One-Tree	Breaks	180	2-120		85	N/A

c. Monitoring and Evaluation

The goal of the CMZ monitoring program is to determine if treatments are meeting the objectives as outlined in the project plan. Prescribed fire treatment monitoring can be defined as a systematic process for collecting and recording information to provide a basis for evaluating, adjusting resource and treatment objectives, methods, and implementation practices. Monitoring and evaluation will follow the guidance stated in the "Prescribed Fire Manual" 9214 (pg.19), RMPs, area-specific planning documents, and project burn plans. The monitoring field sheets and written protocols are located in L:\Fire Management\fuels\Field Sheets\field_sheets.

d. Prescribed Fire Treatment Map

Refer to Appendix A for the prescribed fire treatment map.

2. Air Quality and Smoke Management

BLM Manual Sections 9211.31(E) Fire Planning and 9214.33 Prescribed Fire Management require compliance with individual state and local smoke management programs that specify the conditions under which burning may be conducted.

The entire Malta Field Office (FPU) lies within Airshed 9 as identified by the Montana / Idaho Airshed Group. The Montana State Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides oversight to the MT / Idaho Airshed Group.

a. Air Quality Issues

Air quality across the Malta Field Office is generally good. Impacts to air quality within the

FPU include: occasional smoke from large fires burning elsewhere in the Northwestern U.S. or Southern Canada; localized short-term impacts from wildland or prescribed fires burning within the FPU; and dust created from wind or agricultural activities.

b. Smoke Sensitive Areas and Class I Air Sheds

There are no Class 1 airsheds, non-attainment areas, or impact zones located within the FPU. There are two Class 1 airsheds that lie to the east of the FPU on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Impacts to these airsheds from wildland fires or prescribed fires within the FPU is possible, but rare because of the distance separating these sensitive areas from the FPU and the predominately light fuel types (grass) that exist within the FPU.

c. Smoke Management Restrictions and Procedures

The best management practices from the Interagency Smoke Management Guide are incorporated into individual prescribed fire plans. Approval for implementation of all prescribed fire projects must be obtained from the DEQ through the MT/ID Airshed Group using the RAZU Online Burn Reporting System (<http://www.smokemu.org>). A list of proposed prescribed fire projects must be submitted to the MT/ID Airshed Group between January 1st and February 27th each year. Requests for approval of individual prescribed fire projects must be submitted to the MT/ID Airshed Group by 1200 MTZ the day before planned ignition. Burning accomplishments must be reported through the RAZU Online Burn Reporting System in a timely manner.

Typically, burn season is closed from December 1st to March 1st each year. Approval to burn during the closed season may be granted on a limited basis to those projects which are considered essential winter burning (i.e. pile burning with snow). Essential winter burn projects must be submitted for approval by the DEQ, through the Regional Airshed Coordinator, by November 1st. Written proposals for closed season burning must include rationale as to why implementation of the project is deemed as essential.

D. Non-Fire Fuels Treatments

a. Annual Activities for Implementation

MaFO out-year planning and budgeting for treatments is developed after identification and prioritization of treatment areas. Wildland urban interface communities on the Federal Register have received priority planning and treatment. Future projects will usually be identified in the Risk Assessment Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). Project planning and treatment objectives are in accordance with RMPs and area-specific planning documents.

The development of treatment proposals is typically accomplished one to three years in advance of planned treatments. Field reconnaissance and interdisciplinary analysis are completed one to two years in advance of project implementation.

All specific, non-fire fuels treatment project plans include pre/post project criteria or silvicultural prescriptions. For specific action items, refer to area-specific planning documents and individual project plans.

b. Equipment and Seasonal Use Restrictions

Equipment and seasonal use restrictions are identified in the Approved Judith Valley Phillips RMP Appendix A, pages 33-37. Project site restrictions are located in area-specific planning documents, project plans, and contract specifications. All non-fire fuel treatments will comply with the equipment and seasonal use restrictions identified and described in Chapter IIID.

c. Monitoring Requirements

The goal of the CMZ monitoring program is to determine if treatments are meeting project objectives. Monitoring for non-fire fuels treatments is based on site specific planning documents, project objectives, and silvicultural prescriptions. Monitoring will ideally provide a basis for adjusting future management decisions and can provide information for education and public meetings in WUI areas.

Forest Vegetation Information System (FORVIS) and Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) methods and software are used to inventory, model, and monitor non-fire fuels treatments in WUI areas.

d. Reporting and Documentation Requirements

Project level reporting requirements have been established and include submissions in National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System (NFPORS) and the Management Information System (MIS). Resource specialists associated with fuels projects report in the Rangeland Improvement Project System (RIPS) and the Budget Planning System (BPS). The CMZ fuels program is currently integrating with the MaFO on the Annual Work Plan (AWP). RAMS will be used for project documentation.

Service contracts require documentation as specified by the state office or the National Business Center. The Contracting Officer Representative maintains a service contract folder that is associated with a project folder.

Documentation requirements such as maps, agreements, monitoring, and project notes are compiled in project folders. The folders are maintained in hard copy formats and in electronic formats on [mafo.share\Fuels](#) and on [lfo.share\Fire Management\fuels](#). The BLM Prescribed Fire Management Handbook 9214 (Draft Oct 3003), page 1-26 specifies project file documentation requirements for fuels treatment projects.

c. Treatment Summary Table

1. Number of Acres Treated
2. Number of Acres Treated with By-Products Utilized
3. Number of Projects Implemented through Local Contractors
4. Total Acres Treated in Condition Class 2 moved to Condition Class 1
5. Total Acres Treated in Condition Class 3 moved to Condition Class 2 or 1

Summary Table: Non-Fire Fuels Treatments								
Project Name	FMU	WUI	1. Acres Treated (or to be treated)	2. By- Product Utilization	3. Local Contractor	4. Condition Class 2 moved to 1 (acres)	5. Condition Class 3 moved to 2 or 1 (acres)	Current Condition Class (acres)
Zortman	Little Rockies	Yes	800	25	Yes, partial	0	500	2 – 200 3 – 600
Landusky	Little Rockies	Yes	800	0	Yes, partial	0	80	2 – 200 3 – 600
Little Rockies LUP	Little Rockies	Yes	7500	0	Not yet contracted	300	0	2 – 550 3 – 3500

The values in this table are subject to change with additional out year planning, evaluation, and unforeseeable constraints.

E. Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Due to the very rural nature of the area and the predominance of plains vegetation, there has not been a historic demand for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation. Plains vegetation is dominated by rhizomatous grasses with a mix of both cool and warm season grasses. Such grass types are able to resprout quickly after fire in many seasons and under many conditions. The plant community is well adapted to fire and both grasses and forbs generally suffer little mortality from wildland fire. Cheatgrass invasion after fire is not an issue unless the soil is disturbed (e.g., in dozer lines) or unless the plant community is badly degraded prior to fire.

Except in the Little Rockies Mountains, forested areas generally occur in breaks coulees that are downslope from communities and rural intermix areas. Thus threats from erosion are not generally an issue.

In the mountain areas, severe fire could lead to erosion, and the need for emergency stabilization using erosion control measures should be evaluated.

Rehabilitation needs often include reconstruction of burned fences or other infrastructure. Depending on the vegetation, planting of conifer trees or non-sprouting shrubs, such as sagebrush,

which comprise critical wildlife habitat, should be evaluated.

F. Community Protection

The table in Appendix D lists the at-risk communities in the planning unit, along with their hazard rating. The hazard rating is based on a state-wide analysis of geographic data (layers) for vegetation, slope, aspect, historical fire occurrence, average wind speed, structure density, roof ratings, building construction, and ISO rating for public protection capability.

1. WUI Communities with Completed Fire Management Plans

Valley County has completed a county-wide pre-disaster mitigation plan for all risks, including fire. Phillips County is currently pursuing such a plan, along with neighboring counties Blaine and Hill. Estimated completion date for Phillips county plan is December 2005.

2. WUI Communities with Fire Prevention Programs

No communities within the planning area have fire prevention plans in place or being implemented.

3. WUI Communities Removed from At-Risk List

The opportunity for cost-share for hazardous fuel reduction on private land has been available in Phillips County since October 2002, but few individual land owners have participated. This program has not yet resulted in removing any communities from the at-risk list.

4. Rural Fire Assistance Program

Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) provides support to local rural and/or volunteer fire districts for needed equipment and training. Funding is administered through the Montana DNRC.

Expenditures for RFA in the field office area for FY 2003 are listed below in Table IV F4.

Priorities for Rural Fire Assistance money for all areas in the planning unit include:

- Adequate communications equipment for use on initial attack and incidents
- Adequate PPE
- Adequate training in wildland fire for all volunteers
- Computer hardware to enable timely fire reporting into the state system
- Providing wildland engines where resources are inadequate
- Upgrading or replacing aging or obsolete wildland engines

Table IV F4 Rural Fire Assistance Expenditures for FY 2003

Name of Individual RFD/VFD	Amount Requested	RFD/VFD Use	RFD/VFD Cost Share (In kind or \$ Amount)	DOI Award Amount
Phillips County	\$73,000	PPE, equip	\$1,555	\$13,999
Saco VFD , Malta VFD , Phillips Co Rural VFD				
Valley County	\$20,166	PPE, comm. equip	\$1,543	\$13,891
county-wide tender; Long Run FD \$8507, Hinsdale VFD \$8507, St Marie RFD \$8507, Ft Peck VFD \$8507, Nashua VFD \$8505				
Montana Eastside County Co-op Program	\$50,000	equipment	\$5,556	\$50,000

V. Organization

A. Budget and Organization

Normal Year Preparedness was determined by the last NFMAS update to the fire program in 1998. The approved staff was augmented by the National Fire Plan requirement that each program be staffed at 100%+ of the Most Efficient Level from 1998. The chart in Appendix F shows the current Central Montana

Zone's approved staffing level and approximate funding level for preparedness and the fuels program. The standardized tables (V-A1 and V-A2) on the following pages show the current approved staffing level and approximate funding level for preparedness and the fuels program.

Table V-A1 - Implemented Year Fire Organization
Current approved staffing level.

Bureau of Land Management Implemented Fire Resources Office: MT-063			
Resources	Quantity	Number of Personnel	Total Work Months
Number of Engines:	7	37	208.5
Number of Water tenders:	1	0	
Number of Dozers:	0		
Number of Tractors / plows:	0		
Number of Fire Boats:	0		
Number of Type 1 Crews:	0		
Number of Helitack Crews:	1	9	52.5
Number of Fuels Crews:	0		
Number of Type 2 Crews sponsored:	0		
Number of Smokejumpers (AK & NIFC only):	0		
Number of Fire Management Officers:	1		12
Number of Assistant FMOs / FCOs:	1		12
Number of Fire Operations Specialists:	2		24
Number of Dispatchers:	5		42.5
Number of Other Aviation Staff (Aviation Mgr., Seat Mgr, etc.):	1		7
Number of Mitigation/Education/Prevention Specialists / Techs:	1		12
Number of Resource Specialists:			
Number of Fuels Specialists:	4		48
Number of Other Fire Staff:	2		22
Number of PFT funded by Preparedness:	6		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Preparedness:	26		
Number of Temporaries funded by Preparedness:	29		
Number of PFT funded by Fuels:	5		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Fuels:	0		
Number of Temporaries funded by Fuels:	0		

* In completing this table, only include Preparedness resource numbers funded by Fire Preparedness (2810) and reflect the peak fire organization resources for the year. Do not include resources funded under severity. The fuels related resources numbers are to include the resource funded by the non-WUI (2823) and WUI (2824) programs.

Table V-A2 - Planned Fire Organization

Bureau of Land Management Planned Fire Resources Office: MT-063			
Resources	Quantity	Number of Personnel	Total Work Months
Number of Engines:	7	39	217.5
Number of Water tenders:	1	2	12
Number of Dozers:	0		
Number of Tractors / plows:	0		
Number of Fire Boats:	0		
Number of Type 1 Crews:	0		
Number of Helitack Crews:	1	9	52.5
Number of Fuels Crews:	1	5	24
Number of Type 2 Crews sponsored:			
Number of Smokejumpers (AK & NIFC only):			
Number of Fire Management Officers:	1		12
Number of Assistant FMOs / FCOs:	2		24
Number of Fire Operations Specialists:	2		24
Number of Dispatchers:	5		42.5
Number of Other Aviation Staff (Aviation Mgr., Seat Mgr, etc.):	1		7
Number of Mitigation/Education/Prevention Specialists / Techs:	1		12
Number of Resource Specialists:			
Number of Fuels Specialists:	4		48
Number of Other Fire Staff:	2		22
Number of PFT funded by Preparedness:	7		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Preparedness:	26		
Number of Temporaries funded by Preparedness:	31		
Number of PFT funded by Fuels:	5		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Fuels:	1		
Number of Temporaries funded by Fuels:	4		

B. Assistance Agreements and Intra/Interagency Agreements

Lewistown Interagency Dispatch Center (LIDC) has the following agreements (Memorandums of Understanding, or MOU's) for the Malta Field Office:

- Fire Operating Plan between Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and associated satellite bases and the BLM (Lewistown, Malta and Miles City Field Offices) for Initial Attack.
- MOU between BLM-Malta Field Office and Board of County Commissioners - Phillips County, Montana for the exchange of initial attack responsibilities to fight forest and range fires in Phillips County, Montana.
- MOU between BLM-Malta Field Office and Board of County Commissioners - Valley County, Montana, and in cooperation with Montana Department of State Lands, Northeastern Lands Office, concerning exchange of initial attack responsibilities to fight forest and range fires in Valley County, Montana.

All copies of these MOU's and agreements are kept in the Lewistown Interagency Dispatch Center (LIDC).

C. Equipment Rental Agreements

A copy of all rental agreements will be available in Lewistown Interagency Dispatch Center (LIDC) as part of the service and supply plan

D. Contract Suppression and Prescribed Fire Resources

Copies of these agreements/contracts are available in LIDC as part of the service and supply plan.

VI. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Malta FMP is a working reference for wildland fire management and hazardous fuels treatments within the MFO. It will be reviewed annually and revised as needed to ensure the strategic guidance provided in the plan is assisting the MFO in meeting its resource and fire management goals and objectives in the Judith Valley Phillips RMP. Revisions, additions, and adjustments in compliance with the RMP may be incorporated into the FMP. Any major changes may require amending the RMP. The review will also ensure that the fire program is being implemented in a safe, cost effective manner as directed in this fire management plan. As national wildland fire performance measures are issued, monitoring and evaluation protocols will be developed to meet those requirements, while following Department and Bureau guidelines

